



COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum
Wednesday 3rd March 2021
3pm – 5pm
Zoom Meeting

Present:

Claire Bernard (CB) (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk and District
Laura Jamieson (LJ) (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk and District
Scott Malcolm (SM)	CVS Falkirk and District
Alan Grey (AIG)	Forth Valley Migrant Support Network
Allan Robertson (AR)	Social Security Scotland
Ania Sandland (AS)	Outside the Box
April Harrison (AH)	Falkirk Council
Arlene Graham (ArG)	ROOTS
Claire Houston (CH)	NHS Forth Valley
Dave Cameron (DC)	Avonbridge Hall
Donald Johnston (DJ)	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Donald Park (DP)	Forth Valley Voluntary Sector Group
Gemma Ritchie (GR)	Falkirk Council
Geoff Reid (GR)	SACRO Forth Valley
Hannah Gray (HG)	Strathcarron Hospice
Jennifer Cochrane (JC)	ROOTS
Jennifer Faichney (JF)	Falkirk Council
Jessica Workman (JW)	Bo'ness and Blackness Community Response
Jessie Anne Malcolm (JMa)	NHS Forth Valley
John Hosie (JH)	Our Place Camelon and Tamfourhill
John McGhee (JMc)	Scottish Seniors Computer Club
Lynne Boslem (LB)	Tamfourhill Community Hub / Tamfourhill Tenants and Residents Association
Mairi Wright (MW)	NHS Forth Valley
Maria Ferrari (MF)	Cyrenians
Martin Allen (MA)	Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Martin Kenny (MK)	Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley
Meghan Hendrie (MH)	Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC)
Paul Anderson (PA)	Falkirk Council
Richard McLennan (RM)	Falkirk Safebase
Sally Buchanan (SB)	Falkirk Council
Sandra Lyon (SL)	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
Sarah McHardy (SMc)	Families Outside
Sharron Linton (SL)	Symington Drive Residents' Association
Vikki Wilson (VW)	Falkirk Samaritans
Yvonne McIntosh (YM)	Maggie's Forth Valley

1. Welcome and Introductions

CB introduced herself, welcomed forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via Zoom. Introductions were made via the Zoom chat function.

2. Review of Previous Minutes (Wednesday 3/2/2021)

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting, with the following updates:

- 2. "Action: CVS Falkirk team to create and share one document with food providers' organisation contact details; all providers present agreed."
 - Carried over to the next meeting.
 - **Action:** SM to complete.
- 2. Vaccines for Carers and Frontline Volunteers: JC mentioned that unpaid and young carers are beginning to receive invitations for their vaccinations; this was confirmed to be [part of the planned rollout](#). (See also the [letter from Dr Steedman](#), Interim Deputy Chief Medical Officer.)
- 2. "Data and Technology": CB asked about the device rollout for school-age children; SB confirmed that this was ongoing for Primary 6 upwards, through Connected Falkirk ([webpage](#) and [Twitter](#)), and that families should contact their schools for any issues around devices for home and blended learning.
- 2. "Vitamin D Provision": CB informed the forum that there had been a delay in receiving the Vitamin D supplements, and that she had informed all those who had requested a supply; the supplements will be dispatched as soon as they are received, and all organisations will receive their full order.
- 3. "Community Choices Initiative": SB confirmed that expression of interest forms only need to include a rough outline of the proposed project at this stage; LJ informed the forum that the deadline had been updated to Saturday 6th March.
- 6. "Mental Health MentiMeter": the results from the MentiMeter have been shared with the Mental Health Sub Group, and an event has been planned; information will be available soon.

3. Falkirk Council Digital Inclusion

SB began by explaining that Falkirk Council's digital inclusion work has been in place and progressing for a number of years, but has come to the forefront due to the pressures and needs of COVID-19.

She and her team are keen to gather views of the longer term work, but in the short term, they have launched 2 pieces of work this week:



- ["Referral for Connectivity and Data Top Up"](#)

A £25 payment for low-income households to help them stay connected, based on referrals from supporting third sector groups and organisations, which can be paid into one of the household's bank accounts (or through other options if this isn't suitable), to be used as the individual sees fit.

Referrals must be made by supporting organisations or groups from the public and third sectors, and cannot be made by individuals.

Members asked the following questions:

- Is there an age range?
 - No, as this is wider than schools, but people referred must be living in Falkirk.
- Will this payment affect other benefits received?
 - It shouldn't, as like the School Meal Payment it should be low enough not to affect benefit amounts.
- Can a household be referred only once?
 - This isn't definite yet, as they are hoping to continue the top ups past March, but the question can be asked.

To make a referral, please visit the [Falkirk Council](#) website.

- [COVID-19 Digital Exclusion Fund](#)

(Further information is available under 6.2.)

Using a similar model to Connected Scotland, the council has allocated at least £50,000 to support people who are [digitally excluded](#) due to cost; the funding will support the cost of equipment and getting connected.

The aim of the fund is to support organisations supporting people who are digitally excluded. (Schools and colleges are not eligible to apply.)

The deadline is **11am on Monday 15th March**; SB explained that the sooner applications were received, the sooner the funding could be allocated.

Members raised the following questions and points:

- Can an application include volunteer expenses and the fees to manage this kind of activity?
 - This hadn't been taken into consideration before; while Falkirk Council would ideally be looking for applicants to absorb this cost (as there are other funders and partners who can help support this), it can certainly be included and will be looked at.



- Volunteer expenses may also be eligible under the [Falkirk COVID-19 Winter Volunteer Expenses Fund](#).
- There is an awkwardness around small communities (which there are many of across Falkirk) and giving help for free, and it is often hard to “even handed”, which can cause community tension. (This group realised they could not apply for Connecting Scotland for the same reason). There are also issues around rural broadband. Would it be possible to use the funding to buy a broadband dongle per household or student in the community, and distribute evenly?
 - It is worth applying, and Falkirk Council will consider this when looking at applications. But there are also options around partnering with bigger organisations who are geographically-focused.
 - SB noted that connectivity is a big issue and bigger piece of work, but that it is relevant to local communities, and she will take it back.
- Are applications regarding additional support needs and home-schooling eligible?
 - They are happy to look at applications for these and decide then.
- How will devices be sourced?
 - This is being looked into; it is possible that this will be done through SCVO, but a decision will be made once the deadline has passed.
- Points raised around the ongoing needs and complications with access for people with sensory disabilities, especially regarding eyesight.
- There are also issues with language; those whose first language isn't English, might have strong or fluent English skills, and they might also be comfortable with technology, but there is no guarantee that these will match up. (I.e. people may not be familiar with technical jargon in English, or vice versa.)
 - CB asked if translators would be the best way to resolve this; AIG explained that in his experience, face to face is best, which is obviously difficult right now.

SB explained that if the Connecting Scotland model doesn't meet Falkirk's needs, she is happy to take that back and to look into alternatives, but they also want to use this opportunity to listen to what's needed.

Additionally, she described the feedback received at this point “invaluable”, and encouraged members to contact her with any questions by email:

sally.buchanan@falkirk.gov.uk

3.1 Scottish Seniors Computer Club Devices Available

JMc mentioned that Scottish Seniors Computer Club has a small number of devices available if anyone needs them: HP Netbook, Samsung 10in tablet, Lenovo 10in tablet, iPhone 5.

The devices need some hardware repairs, which the Club can arrange, but they will need to know the cost for parts first.



Action: Anyone interested in these devices should contact JMc by email: jgmcg@blueyonder.co.uk

3.2 Outside the Box “Digital Buddies”

AS spoke about an Outside the Box project in the Borders, “[Digital Buddies](#)”, where they put people in touch with very informal volunteers. The project is relatively easy to manage, and AS is happy to share the details with anyone interested.

Action: Anyone looking for more information on Digital Buddies should contact AS by email: ania@otbds.org

3.3 Tamfourhill Community Hub / Tenants and Residents Association

The Tamfourhill groups have set up a group and neighbouring system for the families and older community members they have previously helped support with devices. Those involved gave their permission to share details, and know how to contact the groups, or a neighbour they can ask for help, who is more “digitally savvy”.

A few of their volunteers signed up for the group, and it has been working great, with younger neighbours can keep an eye and check up on those living on their own.

3.4 Strathcarron Hospice Storytelling Workshop

HG shared information about the Hospice’s new weekly storytelling workshops in the chat:

“We have an 89 year old hosting a storytelling workshop on a weekly basis. With COVID-19, she wouldn't be able to share this amazing gift that she has if she didn't have access to the internet. There's so much to be said about tapping into what people care about, then the technology just becomes a channel for this, rather than a scary new thing.”

For further information on these workshops, contact the Compassionate Communities Team by email: fv.compassionatecommunities@nhs.scot

3.5 AbilityNet

YM included the AbilityNet contact details in the chat, who can offer free IT support for communities and third sector groups:

- phone: 0800 269 545
- [website](#)

4. Digital Inclusion MentiMeter

Using MentiMeter, the CVS Falkirk team asked members:



- “What stops people accessing digital services?”
 - Common themes of lack of trust, lack of knowledge, and fear.
- “If you had better or cheaper access to the internet, what would you use it for?”
 - Groups, classes and online learning, social media and social interaction, safe shopping, reliable information.
- “What could be done to get people online and help stay online?”
 - Information on security, confidence building activities, intergenerational work or activities.
 - It was noted that some people choose to remain digitally excluded, which is their right, and all discussions must be mindful of this.

Discussion then took place around the answers provided, with the most common themes and points listed above. LJ also highlighted that the average reading age of people in the UK is 9 years old, and efforts to get people online should keep this in mind and use simple, accessible language.

5. Mental Health

5.1 Falkirk Samaritans

CB introduced VW, who had arranged to share the Falkirk Samaritans leaflets to groups and organisations throughout the area; these will be distributed by MK’s team at RVS Forth Valley.

Action: Groups interested in receiving leaflets to email SM with their name, organisation or group name, and where they would like the leaflets to be delivered to.

VW then ran through the available leaflets, including the SHUSH leaflet.

[SHUSH](#) is Samaritans’ active listening tips, helping guide people in how to listen, which is a skill people use everyday but often don’t realise how powerful it is. As VW said, “There is nothing more powerful than a listening ear.”

- **S**how you care
- **H**ave patience
- **U**se open questions
- **S**ay it back
- **H**ave courage

For further information on SHUSH, please visit the [Samaritans](#) website (towards the middle of the page).

Other leaflets included awareness cards, and others with more information; as VW noted, which leaflet a group needs will depend on their aim.



VW also highlighted that since lockdown in March 2020, one fifth of callers to Samaritans were people concerned about COVID-19, and that while the helpline service is being used more than ever, the main topic of discussion has changed, as it had for everyone.

Members asked if the leaflets are available digitally; VW confirmed the majority are.

Action: SM to send copies of the digital leaflets to the forum mailing list.

5.2 Community Mental Health Subgroup

CB provided an update from the subgroup, which asked forum members what it can do to support members' organisations supporting communities and individuals.

She also noted that the substance misuse group (which includes use of cigarettes and alcohol) was concerned as people consumed more alcohol during lockdown than they would "normally" or than they used to. They are especially concerned that people may not realise the impact this can have on their mental health, including making them more anxious.

Members asked questions around issues with dealing, which CB will enquire about.

Action: GR to email CB with concerns around dealing:
claire.bernard@cvsfalkirk.org.uk

Action: CB to forward enquiry to appropriate person.

5.3 Community Information Session

A community information session on mental health will take place during the next Compassionate and Included Communities Forum meeting on Wednesday 24th March, 3pm – 5pm, which will be based on the feedback submitted via MentiMeter at this forum's last meeting.

Action: Those looking for anything to be included at this session should contact CB by email.

6. Funding

CB highlighted the following funding opportunities:

6.1 NHS Forth Valley Community Food Grants Still Available

The NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Team still has some funds left in its [Community Food & Growing Projects Grant](#). The closing date has passed, but any applications received before Friday 5th March will be considered.



The grants aim to support the development of local food and growing activities and initiatives across Forth Valley. They are particularly interested to hear from applicants who wish to develop remote or virtual cooking and growing projects

For further information, including how to apply, please visit the [CVS Falkirk](#) website.

6.2 COVID-19 Digital Exclusion Fund

The deadline for Falkirk Council's COVID-19 Digital Exclusion Fund is **11am on Monday 15th March**.

The council has allocated at least £50,000 to support people who are [digitally excluded](#) due to cost; the funding will support the cost of equipment and getting connected.

The aim of the fund is to support organisations support people who are digitally excluded.

Organisations can apply for up to £5,000 to provide connectivity, devices and support to people living in Falkirk who are **BOTH**:

- digitally excluded (do not have an appropriate device and/or are not connected to the internet at home)
- on low incomes and cannot afford to buy a device or pay for internet access

To apply, or for further information (including application guidance), please visit the [Falkirk Council](#) website.

6.3 Winter Support Fund

CB informed the forum that food providers who had previously applied to the [Winter Support Fund](#) should have received an email, informing them that they are able to apply for another payment.

6.4 Climate Action Fund (Round Two)

The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF)'s Climate Action Fund (CAF) is open for applications to its second round.

CAF supports communities across the UK to take action on climate change over 10 years, through people-led work and activities.

This second round will focus on supporting medium-scale to large-scale projects addressing waste and consumption. TNLCF's focus remains on [place-based](#), community-led partnerships making the changes in their community which they believe will have the biggest impact.



Around £8 – 10 million is available for this round, with 12 – 15 awards expected to be made.

The deadline for initial applications is 5pm on Thursday 8th April.

For further information, including how to apply, please visit the CVS Falkirk website.

6.5 Giving World: Access to Free Surplus Essential Products

[Giving World](#) helps third sector organisations and groups access free essential products, by working with businesses to redirect their end-of-line, surplus and discontinued stock to communities across the UK.

They have a wide range of products available, including clothing for adults and children, toiletries, baby products, toys, bedding, kitchen equipment and other household items, books, crafts and ambient foods.

Available products can be viewed via [their website](#), where organisations can also register for free to request items and receive stock updates.

For further information, please visit the [CVS Falkirk](#) website.

6.6 Youth Scotland Winter Fund

With support from STV Children's Appeal and Scottish Government, Youth Scotland has launched the Youth Scotland Winter Fund.

The fund is open to Youth Scotland members, who can now apply for £500 – £5,000 to support children, young people and families in their youth group in immediate need. The fund can be used for food, clothes, fuel, toiletries, and basic household essentials which meet the immediate material needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

There are no deadlines and applications will be reviewed on a regular basis. Successful applicants will be asked to complete an end of project reporting form.

For further information, including eligibility and how to apply, please visit the [CVS Falkirk](#) website.

6.7 Volunteer Expenses Winter Fund

The COVID-19 Winter Volunteer Expenses Fund is now available for volunteers to reclaim their travel expenses for COVID-19 related volunteering.

It is recognised that volunteers and organisations are continuing to support activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This valuable contribution within our communities is essential and very much appreciated.



CVS Falkirk will administer the fund and process all expense claim forms, making payment directly to the volunteer.

For further information, including how to apply, please contact us by email: info@volunteerfalkirk.org.uk

Alternatively, for further information, visit the CVS Falkirk website.

7. Partnership Updates

7.1 Forth Valley Migrant Support Network

ALG gave an update on their online meeting for Child Poverty Action Group's (CPAG) initiative, [End Child Poverty This Valentines](#), which ALG thought went very well.

Additionally, the Network is almost completely funded for the next 13 months; ALG thanked CVS Falkirk for their support in accessing funding.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 17th March, 3pm – 5pm
via Zoom**

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